

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

20 February 1957

STAFF MEMORANDUM NO. 10-57

SUBJECT: The Current Soviet Position on Disarmament

Conclusion

1. The recent weakening of the Soviet position in East Europe, the general increase in international tension, and moves by the US to strengthen its military base structure have probably not influenced the USSR to change materially its terms for a disarmament agreement. But Soviet leaders may estimate that conditions for reaching a partial agreement on these terms have been made more favorable by frictions in the Western alliance, by renewed public apprehension and demands for nuclear weapon controls, and by economic pressure in Western Europe against armament expenditures. Hence the Soviet proposals for a new summit meeting, for a world disarmament conference, for UN disarmament negotiations on the foreign minister level, and for a "business-like" session of the UN subcommittee in order "to agree on something."

Soviet Objectives

2. From the Soviet viewpoint an international agreement on disarmament measures would be of major advantage, not only as reducing the danger of war but also for economic reasons. The diversion of a substantial portion of the USSR's military effort to other channels would promote the growth of the Soviet civil economy and its potential in the international field. At the same time, in the Soviet view, an important reduction in US military expenditures would at least temporarily disrupt the economic growth of the major Western powers, and might lead them to economic disaster.

3. In pursuit of this objective the USSR has particularly since 1954 made a number of comprehensive proposals for international disarmament, successive plans containing one or another concession to earlier Western objections. The chief such concessions have been on control mechanisms (the 1955 "Bulganin plan" for ground inspection posts and the November 1956 proposal that aerial inspection of a zone in central Europe be considered), on armed force levels (agreeing in 1955 to the Western figure of 1.5 million for the great powers and in

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July 1956 to the revised Western figure of 2.5 million), and on a tie-in between nuclear and conventional disarmament (separating them in March 1956 to meet Western objections to the Soviet proposal of May 1955 and recombining them in November 1956 to meet reversed Western objections).

4. During the past two years the USSR has also publicized its own unilateral disarmament measures, evidently with the objective of increasing the pressure of public opinion on Western governments to cut armament expenditures in the absence of an international agreement. Its public diplomacy and propaganda for a formal agreement, as exemplified in its approach to the current negotiations, are likewise conditioned by the objective of bringing pressure to bear on Western governments as well as by the general aim of taking credit for a virtuous initiative.

Soviet Reservations

5. Important as disarmament might be to the USSR, it has not been willing to reach an agreement at the sacrifice of other major Soviet interests. The sticky issues have been two, controls and political settlements.

6. Controls. Although the November 1956 proposal, like earlier ones, speaks of "rigid and effective international supervision which has at its disposal all rights and functions necessary" to check on implementation of the agreement, this stipulation has never been spelled out. The USSR would almost certainly regard the establishment of an inspection system of sufficient magnitude and authority to enforce a ban on the manufacture of nuclear warheads, for example, as an unacceptable infringement on its sovereignty and a threat through espionage and subversion to its security.

7. Political Settlements. The USSR has also been unwilling for the sake of a disarmament agreement to make any substantial concessions in the field of European security, in particular any concessions toward Western conditions for the reunification of Germany. Soviet insistence on an effectively Communist orientation for a unified Germany seems firmer than ever before.

8. It may be supposed that these reservations will be essentially maintained in the current negotiations. So long as the USSR expects ultimately to outstrip the West economically as well as militarily, and so long as the threat of war does not meanwhile become imminent, the advantages of a disarmament agreement would not warrant accepting terms prejudicial to its security at home or its key position in Germany. The changes in the international situation during 1956 do not appear to have shaken Soviet confidence in ultimately outproducing the West or in avoiding war in the meantime.

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The Current Soviet Proposal

9. The USSR's proposal of 17 November 1956 divides disarmament measures into two stages, those to be accomplished within one year (some of them during 1957) and those scheduled for two years or longer. The one-year proposals, except for their extreme deadlines, are in general of a realistic nature which suggests that the USSR considers them a reasonable basis for negotiations; those of longer term are for the most part patently unacceptable to the US or to the USSR itself.

10. The short-term and more realistic proposals are:

- a. Forces ceilings of 2.5 and .75 million for US, USSR, China and Britain, France respectively, with corresponding armament reductions (1 year).
- b. Nuclear test ban (immediate).
- c. One-third reduction in four-power forces in Germany (during 1957).
- d. "Considerable" reduction in forces stationed abroad under NATO and the Warsaw Pact (during 1957).
- e. Bulganin ground inspection against concentration for surprise attack (time unspecified).
- f. "Examine" use of air photography over limited zone in Europe (time unspecified).
- g. Non-aggression pact among NATO and Warsaw Pact members (time unspecified).

11. The other proposed measures are increasingly unrealistic:

- a. Forces ceilings of 1.5 and .65 million respectively (2 years).
- b. Complete nuclear weapons ban and destruction of stocks (2 years).
- c. Liquidate all foreign bases (2 years).
- d. Cut military expenditures in accordance with a, b, c (above) (2 years).
- e. Eliminate all armed forces except militia, police, border guards (time unspecified).

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12. It is not possible to anticipate with precision what less than advantageous terms, what control devices, or what political settlements the USSR might accept in order to get agreement on measures beyond those listed in paragraph 10. A freezing of its nuclear warhead stocks at present disadvantageous levels, a thorough control monitoring of its use of fissionable material, and the abandonment of its position in Germany are in these three categories each an almost certainly unacceptable extreme. Soviet willingness to make concessions in respect to control mechanisms would probably increase with an apparent increase in the danger of war, notably if West Germany or West Europe under German hegemony should be about to acquire a substantial nuclear capability of its own.

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